

When are we to expect a visit from you?
can you not come on in the winter vacation?
we should be only too happy to welcome you
here.

I hope this letter will not go down to
Port Royal as my last one did. I can't
imagine how my plain hand can be mis-
understood, but I shall take particular pains
to make this superscription legible.

Remember me affectionately to Mrs. Gray
and believe me

very truly your friend

Isabella James

Phil. Dec. 22^d 1863.
400 South 9th St.

My dear Dr. Gray

As I hope you will re-
ceive this on Xmas eve. I must begin my
~~my~~ letter by wishing you a Merry Christmas;
but I suppose with you it will be rather a
happy Christmas than a merry one, for the
latter word implies a house full of noisy
children, not the quiet sober happiness of a
middle-aged couple. To confess the truth
I would gladly transfer to your "quiet
home" some of the noise and mirth of ours.
For boys do become rather obstreperous about
this time, & for a week or two they live in
such a whirl of happiness and the engine
runs with such double speed that no wonder
the steam sometimes escapes with a rush
that threatens to overflow all the bystanders.

The children are now in the full tide
of expectation & various little secrets are con-

folded to my ear which must not be divulged until the important day arrives.

Clarence has devoted some of his money to be photographed for the benefit of his friends, & he has many applications for his carte de visite as most people prefer a handsome face in their albums to an ugly one. He wishes you to have one as his Christmas gift and hopes you will not think he dishonors the name he bears. He sends you his love and a merry Xmas & wishes you were here to have a good time! but perhaps you would wish yourself away from his lively tongue for he has a most wonderful gift of talking, does not this point rather towards political life than to the quiet studies of the Botanist?

I heard of Mrs. Gray at the great Sanitary Fair so I suppose she is well, or one could not have endured the crush of that crowd. I trust her health was improved by her journey last summer. I heard of you at the Bonstables in N. York from Mrs. James Bonstable here -

According to the papers the Fair seems to have been a great success, I hope it will bring in funds to Sanitary commission for the drain upon that association is now very great and their incomes are not nearly as large as formerly. Dr. Bellows is desirous that one of the same kind should be held in Philadelphia and I dare say it will be carried out at Easter.

I mail for Mrs. Gray some copies of "Three weeks at Gettysburg" which perhaps she has not seen the ladies were Mrs. Howland and Miss Woolsey of New-York. It is wonderful how much ladies have been able to accomplish during this war and I ~~feel~~ quite proud of my sex for I feel as if they had done everything to uphold the hands of and stir up the hearts of the lords of creation who are doubtless more inclined to look upon the dark side of the picture than we are - alas the picture is dark enough but we have the happy faculty of making the most of every bit of sunlight and reflecting it upon our companions.